Transcript to Accompany *Virginia Adult Education 7-Year Trends* Recording

Slide 1

Hello, my name is Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, I am the Director of the Office of Adult Education at the Virginia Department of Education. This tutorial is a lookback at seven years of Virginia Adult Education trend data, program years 2017-2018 through 2023-2024.

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The purpose of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, or AEFLA, which is title II of the *Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act*, is to create a partnership among the federal government, states, and localities to provide adult education and literacy activities to all of these very broad purposes. Some keywords are extracted here on the screen: To assist adults to become literate and economically self-sufficient; to assist parents or family members to become full partners in the educational development of their children; to assist adults to earn a secondary diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training; assist immigrants to develop skills in English and learn the roles and responsibilities of citizenship; and to assist incarcerated individuals successfully re-enter our society. That’s a very broad purpose and we are proud to work on all parts of it.

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As you may know, Virginia is divided in to 22 regions for adult education. This ensures that we have full coverage for the Commonwealth. Our fiscal agents are local educational agencies such as school divisions, community colleges, and community-based organizations. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education grants are awarded based on population need, not necessarily by region.

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This slide shows our funding and includes the 2024-2025 award. Our federal awards have generally increased over the years, as you can see in blue. Our state awards have remained stable. Of note, our localities are required to provide a 15% match to the federal awards, so adult education in Virginia is truly a federal, state, and local partnership.

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Whom do we serve? We have some slides that cover all of these data points.

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Our enrollment trends are presented here. Of course, our enrollment decreased during the pandemic, but as you can see, we never closed, and we have rebounded. In the most recent year, enrollment was 19,590 students which passed pre-pandemic levels.

One thing to celebrate is that our retention rates remained high during the pandemic and beyond, and I want to celebrate what that means: from the programs that’s a lot of tutoring, personal outreach, and flexibility extended to students to help them stay and attain their goals. So I want to give kudos to our programs and teachers for that extra effort.

The graph on the bottom right is correctional education and as you may know, many facilities were completely closed to outside services during the pandemic and even during the past few years many facilities were short staffed and could not accommodate services coming in. This set of our population is rebuilding more slowly as those facilities get back to normal and we are eager to increase our services.

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We can look at enrollment trends by program type. This past year we were back on trend with about 57% of our students in English language acquisition programs. Within this population, we serve students with a wide range of education, from those who have had interrupted education to those who have already earned postsecondary degrees. In program year 2023-2024, 35% of our foreign-educated students were internationally trained professionals.

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We serve working age adults, mostly women. Our largest age group is 25-44 years old, seen in the middle of the chart. These are very busy years in a family for adults and we applaud our students for adding education onto their already busy schedule. It’s worth noting that over 62% of our students are women and this is something we are looking at for programming implications. I’d also like to pause for a moment on the youth population. We can see that we serve young students, 16-17, and assist them to earn their secondary credential if they have been released and excused from compulsory attendance. In program year 2023-24, we served 4,500 students in what WIOA considers youth, which is up to age 24.

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Here is another way to look at enrollment. We serve minorities, mostly Hispanic. You can see the trends here with the sharp uptick here after the pandemic. You can see that Hispanic students, shown here in red, are our largest minority group. It was the most impacted in our enrollment in 2020-2021 but is back to trend. It is worth saying that Hispanic women was our largest single demographic group.

Taken together, adult education in Virginia is a majority-minority program. Over 75% of our students identify themselves as a race or ethnicity other than White.

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Here is another way to look at our busy learners. Over half of them tell us that they are employed when they enroll – even during the pandemic when so many people were out of work. Students come to us not necessarily for job placement They are seeking skills that will help them advance in their lives and careers. It is a real honor and privilege to serve learners who are so motivated to continue their education that they are adding it to very busy lives.

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I want to talk about how we measure success in adult education. I have some slides to talk about all of these points.

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One programming model that we are very proud of is Integrated Education and Training. This is an accelerated combination of academic skills, English language proficiency, workforce preparation, and occupational training toward earning an industry recognized credential. These programs are usually short in duration, not longer than a semester and often quite a bit shorter than that. They are intense, goal-driven, and prepare students for credential exams. We have consistently run about 10% of our overall enrollment in IET programming and last year we topped 13 percent. The national average is about 5 percent of enrolled students in an IET. The top sectors in 2023-2024 are shown on the left and you click to a map of planned offerings at IETBlueprint.com.

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We report to the federal office our Measurable Skill Gain rate as one of our six WIOA performance indicators; it is a measure that reflects gains made during the program year. You can see that 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were quite disrupted as Virginia had, with the rest of the nation, allowance to not require assessments which had to be administered in person. We were offering services but not assessing students regularly, so students’ gains were not well documented. Something else that has positively impacted our MSG performance since the pandemic has been the addition of three new MSG types being allowed for students in an IET or workplace literacy programs and two new gain types added in 2023-24, so we have seen a boost from those additions of those MSGs as well.

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Credential attainment rate is another of the six performance indicators. This measure is a follow up measure of students’ outcomes within a year of exiting the program. We capture this data through data matches with the National Student Clearinghouse, the Virginia Community College System, and through supplemental data captured by the programs. You can see that we exceeded our target on this measure in 2023-2024.

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Median earnings second quarter after exit is another of the six WIOA performance measures and another one that is captured for students who have exited. This chart shows a steady increase in earnings for our alumni students and that Virginia exceeded the negotiated target in 2023-24. See also the note on the left about our IET students’ earnings: Credentials matter in the workplace! Our former IET students’ earnings were over $500 greater than the overall state average.

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Of course, we are proud of our High School Equivalency work that help folks get their secondary credential and get back on track. Currently, the GED® is the only approved High School Equivalency test in Virginia. This slide shows us Virginia as a whole, not only adult education students. Again, during the pandemic, testing centers had very limited hours or limited seating, or both. Online proctored testing did get started in 2020, and now that is part of the normal mix that we can offer students. We are now seeing test-takers, completers, and passers all on the rise. As you know, there are four tests in the GED® battery and you must pass all four to earn the credential, so we will always see more test takers than passers. Our pass rate in Virginia overall is 78%, which is higher than the national average. We are proud of our GED® program and all of our graduates.

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This slide is not a trend but rather is displaying a single year, but the trend has stayed the same. I want to point out that we are a largely part-time workforce. Almost 94% of our teachers are part-time, our paraprofessionals are largely part-time, 92% of our counselors or career navigators are part-time, and about half of our administrators are part-time with a program. This situation has implications for how we run our program, provide professional development, and plan for change and new initiatives. This is a little above the national ratio for part-time to full-time, and it is a challenge we continue to face.

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This slide presents statewide priorities that guide our work and areas of growth. In our statewide professional development, we are focusing on the science of reading for adults and adult second language learners as well as improving service in all areas for adults with disabilities. We are continuing to provide standards-based instruction, digital skills, and civic instruction. We’ve transitioned to a new database for program management and improvement and continue to offer training to users to make that transition as smooth as possible. We have two ways to promote the opportunity for students to “test for free” and earn their GED® credential and we are continuing to expand IET opportunities and increase career pathways to address job openings and student choice.

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That concludes the trend recording. Please reach out to us, we are happy to talk to anybody about adult education. We are proud of our programs, our students, and our teachers. We look forward to the rebounding enrollment and expanding programming in Virginia. Thank you.